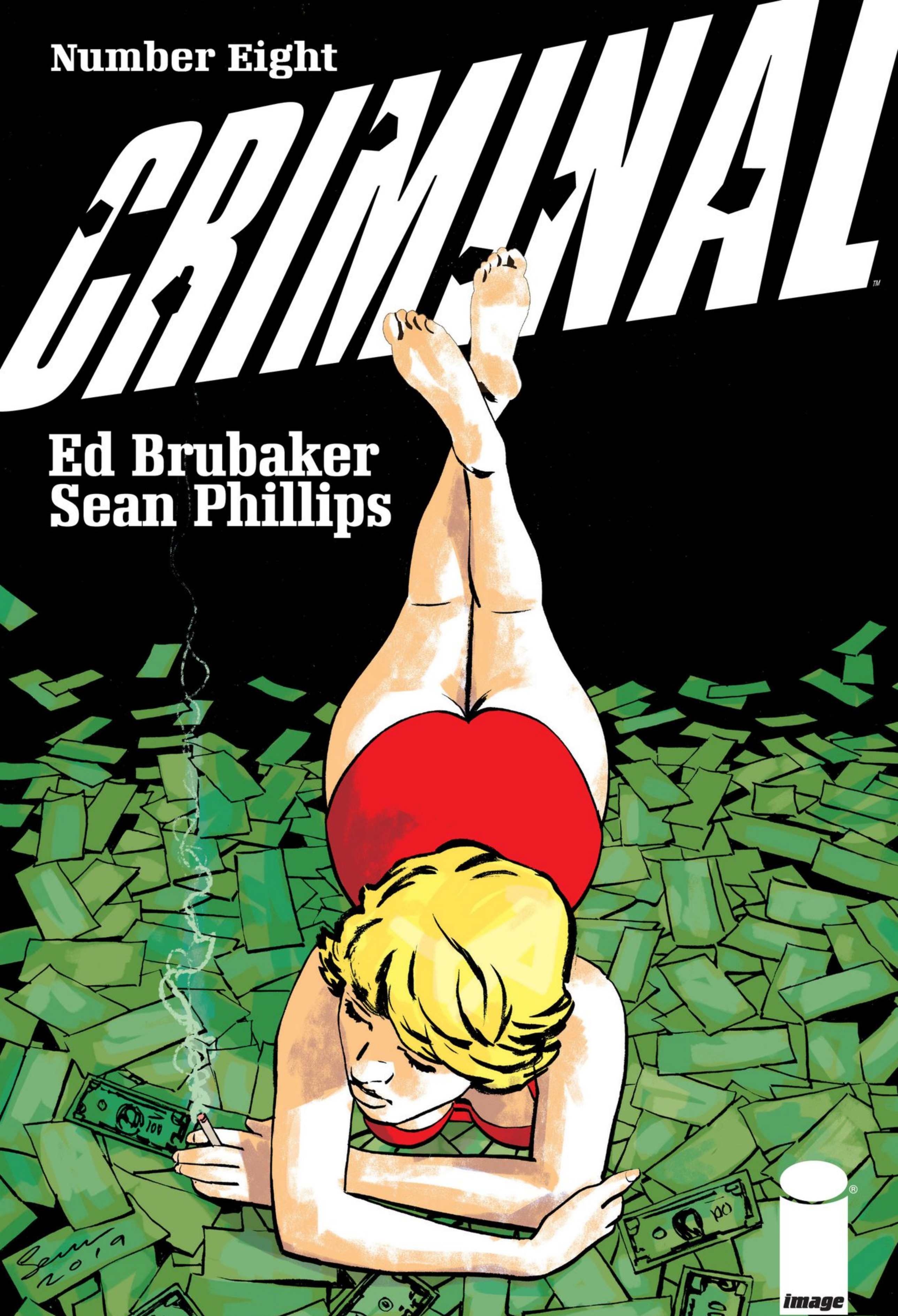
Number Eight

CRIMINAL™

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips



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by
Ed Brubaker and
Sean Phillips

Colors by
Jacob
Phillips

Cruel Summer

Part Four

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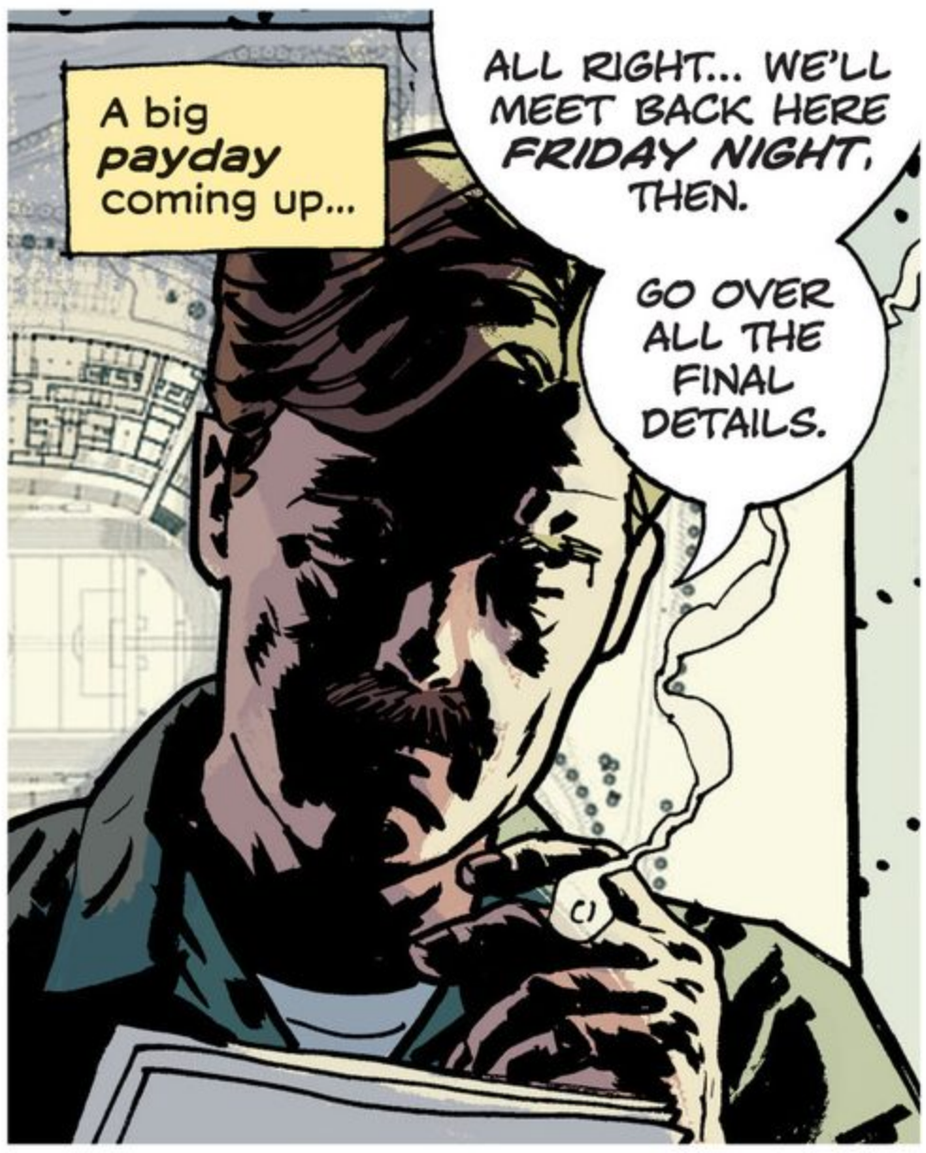
Upon the Edge of No Escape



Travel brochures for ***exotic destinations*** stacking up on the bedside table...

First class tickets reserved.

EVERYONE TAKE CARE OF THEIR END AND WE SHOULD BE GOOD TO ***GO***.

But something about how it was all going so well made Jane feel uneasy.

I'M GONNA CATCH A RIDE WITH RINGO... YOU OKAY TO GET ***HOME*** ON YOUR OWN?

YEAH, I'VE GOT SOME ERRANDS TO RUN ANYWAY.

Like she was waiting for something to go wrong...

And every day that it ***didn't***, that feeling just grew stronger.

ALL RIGHT, WE'LL GO OUT FOR ***DRINKS*** TONIGHT...

SOMEPLACE NICE.

SURE... SEEYA AT THE HOUSE LATER.

EVERYTHING OKAY, JANE?

YEAH... JUST THINKING.

WHAT ABOUT?

TRYING TO DECIDE BETWEEN TAHITI OR THE BAHAMAS.

WELL... DON'T GO SPENDING THE MONEY BEFORE WE GET OUR HANDS ON IT.

I DON'T KNOW... I THINK THAT'S THE BEST TIME TO SPEND MONEY...

WHEN IT'S JUST A HOPEFUL GLINT ON THE HORIZON.

But had she actually *missed* something...

Or was her sense of inevitable *doom* just showing up early?

That was the question.

Her only memories of her father are from early childhood...

The years he spent digging up the backyard to build a bomb shelter.

That's what she remembers...

Him coming in the kitchen door covered in sweat and mud.

Drinking a can of beer over the sink.

And later, when it was finished, he'd sit out in that little bunker every night, listening to his ham radio.

Talking to other men in other places... all in their own bunkers. Underground.

That was where they found him, hanging from a belt strung over the back of a door.

The radio still chattering away in some foreign language.

Probably about the end of the world.

Whenever she thinks about that, her dad hanging dead in his bomb shelter, her mind goes to another early memory...

Third grade, 1958... Class drills.

Duck and cover.

DONUT HOUSE

All of them kneeling under their school desks, heads down.

Waiting for bombs to fall.

Her father got tired of waiting.

But it was all Jane had known.

Sometimes she feels like she's spent her whole life waiting for a blast to come across the horizon and wipe it all away.

But she knows that's not true... She's actually spent most of her life ***running*** from that blast.

Trying to feel ***alive***, like it's an act of defiance.

And in a way, it is... Because when she feels alive, for even fleeting moments...

She can ***forget*** what she's waiting for.

And now, living here with Teeg, being part of this heist with him...

Jane feels more alive than she has in a ***decade*** or more.

Danger vibrates in the air around them.

It's practically intoxicating.

Teeg just needed some molding. To be taught how to live the right way.

Which didn't really take that much money, you just had to be willing to spend what you had...

Then find more before it ran out.

And most people, even rich men, didn't really enjoy spending money... They liked ***having*** money.

But Jane could teach Teeg the benefits of room service and cabanas on the beach...

And penthouse suites.

And finding more money? With him, that would be part of the fun.

And it would keep her feeling ***alive***, for a while, at least.

So why was there a rock in the pit of her stomach already?

Why does it feel like it's all going ***wrong***, when it looks like it's all going ***right?***

What has she missed?

The kid.

SHIT...

Of course, Teeg's son.

That has to be it, the trouble she can't see coming...

The out of control ***sixteen-year-old*** boy.

RICKY...? YOU HOME?

The past few days Ricky had been sulky and quiet.

None of his usual complaining or snide looks... No treating her like an intruder.

In fact, he was barely even paying attention to Jane or Teeg.

He was just locked in his room listening to records too loud.

Mostly, ***Joy Division***.

She got him both of their albums a few weeks ago, and she's kind of proud of the fact they never leave his turntable now...

Especially since he sneered at them at first, like anything ***she*** picked must automatically suck.

But still, Jane should have noticed something was *different* about him...

She was too close to a new life, and the pile of money that would take her to it, to be letting things fall through the cracks.

So what was *going on* with this kid?

Was he strung out on drugs?

Was he suicidal?

Or was he -

OH SHIT.

Ammo for a *38*.

And a *smell* she recognizes immediately...

Gunpowder, like from a recently fired pistol.

Wherever he is... The fucking kid has a *gun* on him.

FUCK...

As she drives to Izzy Kurtz's place - his son is friends with Ricky - her mind ping pongs back and forth between two possibilities...

Either he's robbing people at gunpoint, which considering who his ***father*** is, could easily be happening...

Or he's off somewhere killing himself.

And when she thinks about that, suddenly she's not so thrilled about him sitting in his room listening to ***Joy Division*** all day long.

...I HAVEN'T TALKED TO RICKY FOR A COUPLE DAYS...

WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO TO THE ***ARCADE*** ON MONDAY, BUT I SAW HIM GETTING ON THE ***NUMBER SEVEN*** BUS INSTEAD.

THAT ONE GOES DOWNTOWN... TO ***G STREET.***

G Street is in the part of downtown where you find the hookers and the junkies.
But there are also a few *bars* down there that the rich college kids like.

So Ricky's probably robbing those college kids, she figures...
Or maybe selling them drugs.

Either one could be trouble...
If the stupid kid gets caught.

That's the *last thing* they need...
A bunch of cops and *Child Welfare* people showing up on their doorstep right now.

HEY, BABY... YOU'RE LOOKIN' LIKE -

FUCK OFF.

In the mid-70s, Jane lived down here for a while, in an apartment with a girl she met in San Francisco.

It was mostly hippies and bikers back then...

Still dangerous, but less depressing.

She worked at a bar down the street, pouring drinks and emptying men's wallets when they weren't looking.

It was fun for a while...

She was in her ***twenties***, so a lot of things were fun for a while.

Shit, the place is still here... It looks almost exactly the same.

CHRIST...

King Joe's

And ***Rhonda*** is still working the night shift...

Hell, she has to be ***fifty*** by now, and she looks older.

Her ***tips*** must be terrible, Jane thinks.

WELL, HOLY FUCK... TALK ABOUT A BLAST FROM THE ***PAST***...

HEY RHONDA...

LAST TIME I SAW YOU, YOU WERE DRIVING OFF IN THAT ***BOUNCER'S*** NEW CAR...

OH YEAH... THAT ***VINCE*** GUY...

HE'S RUNNIN' DOWN THE STREET AFTER YOU, TRYING TO PULL UP HIS ***PANTS***... ALL -

HEY! THAT'S MY CAR!

WHAT ***WAS*** THAT, 1976?

YEAH, I THINK SO.

DAMN... LONG TIME...

OH HEY - Y'KNOW, I *THOUGHT* YOU MIGHT BE BACK IN TOWN, ACTUALLY.

YOU *DID?*

YEAH, I HEARD SOMETHING... IT MUST'VE BEEN...

Oh shit.

LIKE A WEEK
SO... THERE W
THIS *GUY* IN
HERE...

There he is.

..AND I HEARD
TOE TELL HIM
THEY USED TO
CALL YOU
SWEET JANE.

HEY RHONDA. I'M SORRY. I GOTTA RUN.

BUT...

I'LL COME BACK *SOON* AND WE CAN CATCH UP FOR REAL.

As she rushes out, part of her mind is thinking: *"what the hell was Rhonda just saying?"*

But the rest of it is focused on the kid... On Ricky.

She's about to call his name...

When she sees him step into the shadows, like he's hiding from someone.

But obviously not her... So then, ***who?***

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ***DOING***, KID?

Then he steps out again, and keeps moving...

And she looks further up the street.

The only person there is some greasy-looking junkie.

Is ***that*** who Ricky's following?

Is he stupid enough to rob a fucking *junkie?*

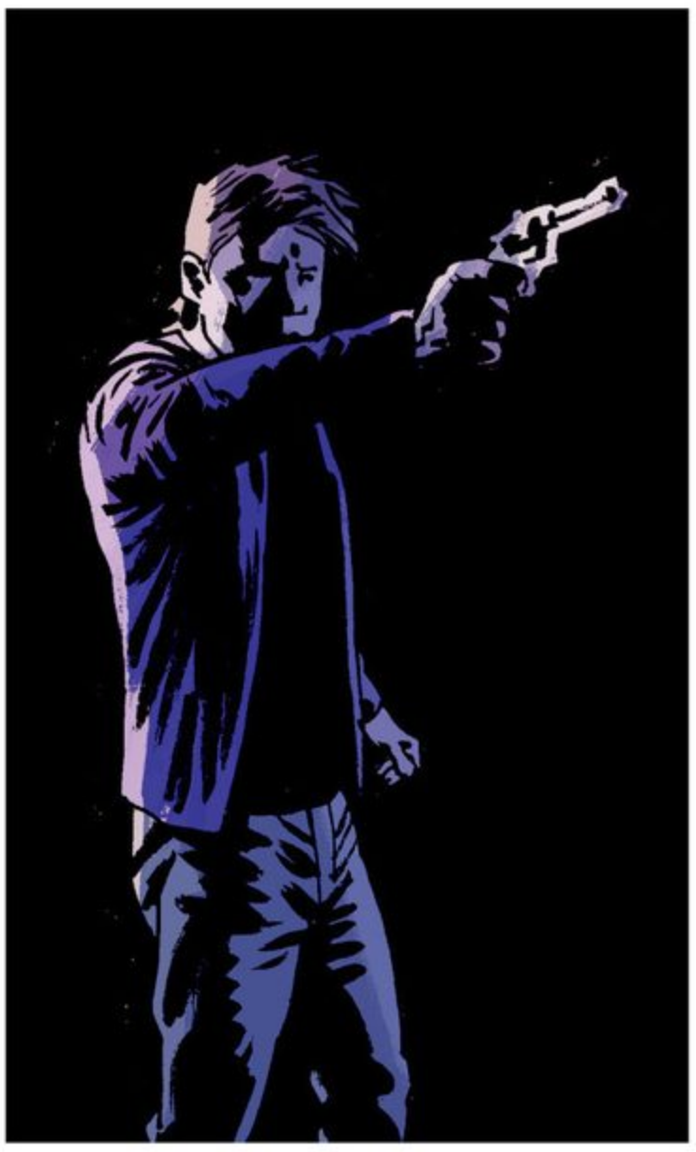
He'll be lucky to get two dollars.

But no...

A second later she realizes...

This is *not* a robbery.

OH SHIT...



Only...

Ricky doesn't shoot...

He just freezes there.

Until his target is gone.

HEY...

...WHY DON'T YOU PUT THAT AWAY, RICKY?

WHH... WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

LOOKING FOR YOU...

WHO *WAS* THAT GUY?

WHAT GUY?

JUST TELL ME.

I KNEW HIM IN *JUVIE*...

WHEN I *FIRST* GOT THERE.

It's the fear in his eyes that hits her.

The same fear she saw in herself at his age...

...Before she took a ***straight razor*** to her stepdad.

OKAY THEN... COME ON...

STAY CLOSE TO ME... AND KEEP QUIET.

He's already nodding out by the time they find him.

Jane figured he would be...
THAT'S HIM?
YOU'RE SURE?

YEAH... HIS NAME IS LUCAS.

...But she's still relieved.

It's easier killing someone who doesn't fight back.

Maybe too easy.

ALFIE'S
DEA

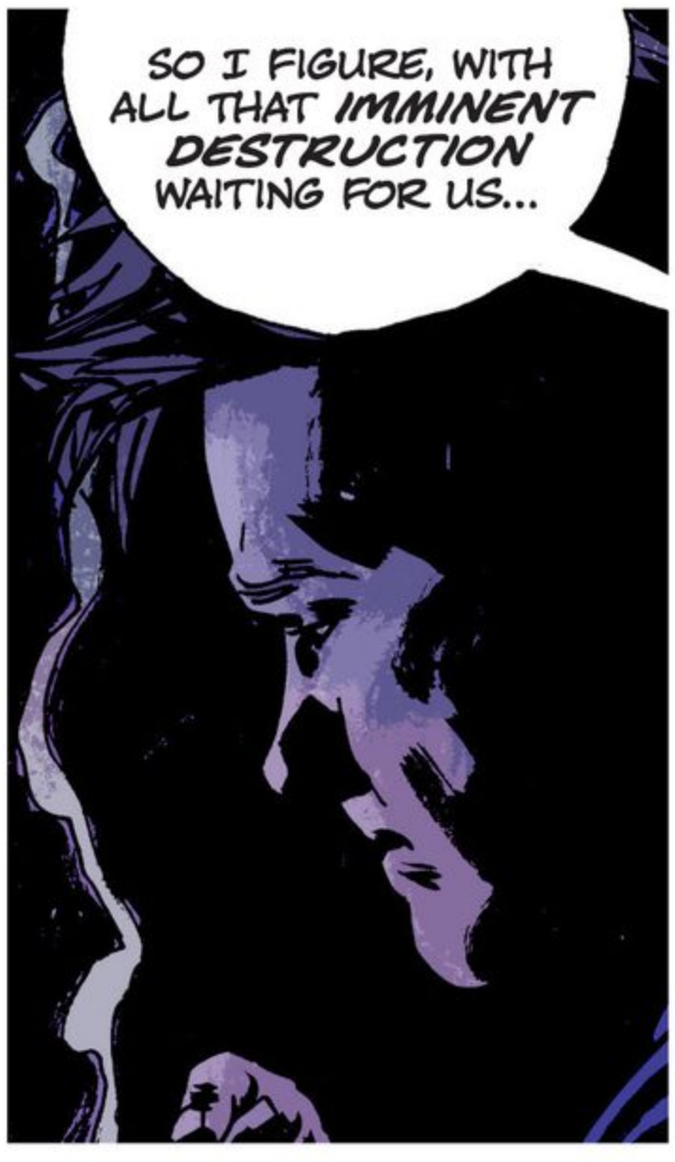
DON'T...
DON'T TELL MY DAD...

NO... OF COURSE NOT.

DID YOU KNOW THE RUSSIANS STILL HAVE OVER 25,000 NUKES AIMED AT US?
WHAT?

YEAH... JUST THINK ABOUT THAT.

EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN...
COULD BE WIPED AWAY... IN ONE BIG FLASH.


SO I FIGURE, WITH ALL THAT IMMINENT DESTRUCTION WAITING FOR US...

THAT WHATEVER WE'VE DONE...

OR WHATEVER'S BEEN DONE *TO* US...

...NONE OF IT MEANS *ANYTHING.*

He's a tough kid. He can survive this, she thinks.

He'll be okay.

YEAH... MAYBE...

But Jane is wrong.

None of them are going to be okay...

...Because all she's done tonight is make mistakes.

HEY JOE...

REMEMBER THAT GUY THAT WAS IN HERE ASKING ABOUT *JANE* THE OTHER DAY?

King Joe's

King Joe's

HE SAID HE WAS PAYIN' FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HER... *RIGHT?*

To Be Continued

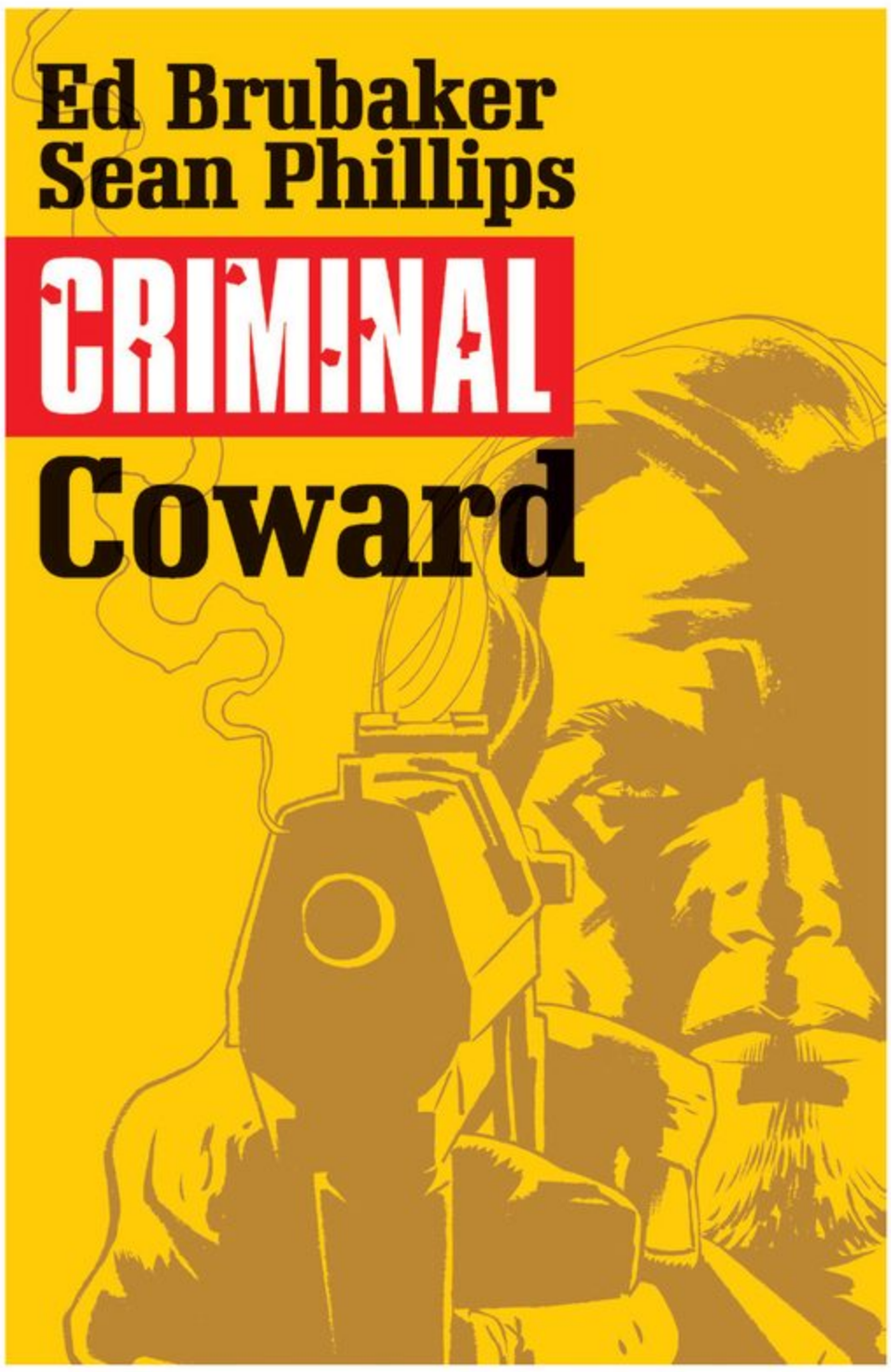
All right, yet another chapter of CRUEL SUMMER wrapped, and we can start to see the various strands of the story coming together finally, although the complications will continue to pile up as it goes along, I promise.

The Secret Ingredient is Crime

Next issue focuses on young Leo, who was the star of COWARD, the very first CRIMINAL book, which takes place 18 years after the events of this story.

***

Just before Comicon, Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard put out the final issue of THE WALKING DEAD, which was released as a shock, because they solicited several issues beyond this one, to make sure it would come as a surprise. And while I applaud the nerve it took to do that, and to end one of the most successful series in the history of comics, I feel like in all the press around the ending, no one mentioned that it's probably the best issue of the comic they ever did. A really heartfelt ending that told a complete story in one really long issue that is basically an entire graphic novel.



I owe a lot to Robert Kirkman. He brought me and Sean over to Image and him and Eric Stephenson changed our lives by giving us our overall deal there, but long before that, when CRIMINAL was just starting out, at Icon, Kirkman did the unheard of thing of giving us a full color preview at the back of an issue of THE WALKING DEAD. A preview for a comic from a rival publisher – and he paid extra out of pocket to add the color pages, even. This helped us reach a lot of readers that would otherwise have never heard about an indie crime comic like this, and I'll never forget it.

So cheers to Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard and THE WALKING DEAD. The most successful independent comic in the history of the medium, all done on their own terms. That's the true dream.

***

It was announced at Comicon that Sean and I are helping to oversee the final collection of Darwyn Cooke's PARKER graphic novels – THE MARTINI EDITION: LAST CALL

I don't have a lot of details to share yet, but Sean is doing the design and I'll be writing some text pieces, an introduction, and maybe some other stuff. I don't have a release date yet, but I'll let you know as soon as I do.

This was something I reached out to our old editor Scott Dunbier about, because I wanted to try to do something to honor Darwyn's memory and his work. I haven't written about Darwyn Cooke back here since his passing a few years ago, though I've tried to several times, but it always came out wrong. His death was a huge shock to me, and his loss to the world of comics is still something I feel immensely. I think these PARKER books are the best things he ever did, or tied for first place, at least, so to be able to help present them to the world in a gorgeous edition is something I'm proud to do.

When I was at Comicon this year, I got to spend a few hours with Jimmy Palmiotti and we talked about the old days and Darwyn, and I realized that for as long as there is a comics industry, we're going to be telling Darwyn Cooke stories. And that's something that made me smile.

***

In the *Readers Comments Dept.* there are a few things I want to point out about this storyline, as it goes along.

As I write this, issue 7 has just come out, and I heard from a few readers who missed why Ricky wanted to kill the junkie guy he knew from juvie, which I thought was completely obvious. I guess this is one of the hazards of doing a story where the focal characters shift around constantly, because it makes the story a bit harder to follow in general, and some less obvious bits might fall through the cracks on a first reading. So... if you got to the end of this issue and you don't know why the junkie got killed... go back and read issue 7 again closer. I always try hard to make sure everything you all need is in there, even if it's subtle (although I really didn't think this was subtle).

Another thing I had a couple people ask was about the format. Since each chapter of CRUEL SUMMER almost reads like a story from a different character's point of view, some have suggested the issues can be read as standalones or in any order. But this is not actually the case – they are intended to be read in order, and each one builds on the chapters that went before.

I can see why some readers might assume since issues 1 and 4 were standalones, that this might be the case, but no, I'm not crazy enough to try to do a big epic like this that could be read in any order. Maybe someday, though. It does sort of sound like a challenge now that I see it written down.

***

Okay, this time in our back pages, Kim Morgan writes about a movie that I've never even heard of, but I now must see. For those curious how we decide what to do with these articles, what happens is Kim and I discuss what the issue of the comic is about, and she suggests a few films that have similar vibes, so the articles feel like a complement to the stories, while being their own thing at the same time. It's a lot of fun. Anyway, this issue she told me about LADYBUG LADYBUG and I couldn't believe I'd never seen this movie. So go read about it. Sean does amazing illustrations for it, as usual.

***

Okay, that's it for this issue. Send us questions and comments to: criminalcomic@gmail.com and we'll see you next month with our Leo issue.

by
Kim Morgan
illustrated by
Sean Phillips

Ladybug Ladybug

Mrs. Forbes (Kathryn Hays) hears the alarm. She sees a letter in a series of squares, it beeps and lights up. She's the secretary to the principal of a grade school somewhere in rural America in 1962 – and she's pregnant. A thin woman well into her pregnancy she moves with ease but, with that child growing inside her, seems extra vulnerable. Just the vision of that pregnant woman in her dress and the alarm and the light and her concerned face – already we feel creeping dread. We don't know if anything is really happening – but we don't want this pregnant woman to fall apart.

Her day did start out somewhat nice – chatting with another teacher and a little boy already sent to the principal's office – it appears to be a morning like any other. Mrs. Forbes is kind to the little boy, Joel (Miles Chapin) who was supposedly bad (it seems more like he's been picked on) and that makes us like her. One woman (a kitchen worker) gives him a treat before he trudges into the principal's office. She says: "When you're in trouble, it helps to have a cookie in your pocket." How moving that gesture seems before what unfolds in this picture, and how extra poignant it is when we walk through the entire movie. And we really do walk through the movie – with those kids and a teacher, and we too begin to feel flustered and exhausted and worried. That cookie could offer such comfort – not just for the sweet taste, but for the soothing memory, the idea that this adult thought you deserved it even if you thought you may have done something bad; and especially if you thought something bad was going to happen to you.

But why should these kids feel so guilty or bad or punishable? It's the adults who create this kind of chaos in the world. They even later vote on it – they don't want any kind of war.

These kids – with varied levels of worry – some calm, some distraught – suspect something bad is going to happen to them. And it grows and grows and grows….

So when the alarm goes off, Mrs. Forbes doesn't panic. She rushes to Mr. John Calkins (William Daniels), the school principal. He inspects what is going on – and they have to take it seriously. They have to evacuate the school. This could mean … a nuclear attack is about to happen. Given this time period (the film was released soon after the Cuban Missile Crisis) it's not paranoia to worry. But, no one totally *believes* it, right? At least they don't *want* to – at first. They round up the kids in groups and select teachers to walk those kids back to their homes.

This is how Frank Perry's *Ladybug Ladybug* (written by his then-wife, Eleanor Perry, adapted from a story by Lois Dickert) begins. A beautiful, haunting, at times terrifying picture, it remains powerful and all-so-human to this day. This was the second film Frank made with Eleanor after *David and Lisa*, about two mentally ill teenagers. They then took on *The Swimmer* (starring Burt Lancaster), a transfixing, potently allegorical and disturbing adaptation of John Cheever's short story. It was a stressful production. The direction was taken away from Frank (an uncredited Sydney Pollack shot the rest) but what you see is another expression of the couple's lyricism and cynicism that, through the early 60s and up until 1970, made them two of the most unique and fascinating independent filmmakers of that time. Among their work, they also made Truman Capote's *Trilogy*, and the moving and disturbing *Last Summer* – a complex film about troubled, confused young people, and one that takes place on a leisurely beach, but a weirdly empty beach. Grown up kids from *Ladybug Ladybug*?

Their partnership ended with their divorce (Frank went on to make films without Eleanor, notably "*Doc*", *Man on a Swing*, *Rancho Deluxe*, the great, incredibly underrated *Play It as It Lays*, and the infamous, and I think impressive, *Mommie Dearest*). Their last film together was one of their best, *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, an especially lacerating portrait of matrimony… A dreamlike, almost mentally insane spell of both abuse and masochism.

Probing the sweetness and alienation and/or rot within adolescence and adulthood, or the challenges of childhood – particularly within the supposed stability of regular America or suburbia, or of marriage – you truly feel unsettled watching *Ladybug Ladybug*. The filmmakers take time with these scenes, they take care with these child actors (all of the actors from kids to adults are spectacular), never talking down to their characters, but never fearing to show how negative, even scary some can be (one in particular).

Ladybug Ladybug, with its stark black and white cinematography, laced with lovely artful touches (there's a scene on a hill that recalls Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*) feels dreamlike. A nightmare, in fact, but one that works as a direct story of fear (it was based on a real incident) and how the children and adults handle themselves. How quickly the veneer of childhood innocence, of safety, can be shattered. The look of uncertainty and sadness on Mrs. Forbes' face as she walks through an empty schoolroom, picking up the tiny chairs, organizing the miniature pots and pans on the play stove, placing a tiny man and woman together, staring out the window adorned with paper children, is so beautifully realized, so mysterious, so sincere.

The woman slowly falling apart is Mrs. Andrews (Nancy Marchand), whom we follow as she leads one group of children to their respective homes in her uncomfortable heels. She walks with the kids behind, feet hurting, her face registering increasing amounts of dread and fear and sadness (when she is alone, she is picked up by a truck driver who plays music loudly – and she laughs a bit but then settles into a look of absolute dread – she is incredible in this little moment). The kids talk – they wonder if the threat is real, some seem almost casual about it, others horrified. One little girl vomits on the side of the road – the poor thing bolts to her father's work, and he acts like she's a hysterical nuisance, then, when home, her mother says she has nothing to worry about. The girl grabs her pet goldfish, hides under her bed, as a dark shadow falls over her face. It's heartbreaking. Another kid goes home to grandma, who is suffering dementia or something like it – and they hide in the basement. He convinces her to come down by telling her it's all

play: "It's called Hide-From-War-Game," he says. Two other kids make it home and pray with their religious mother in the cellar – it feels more disturbing than soothing. Another little girl, Sarah (Marilyn Rogers) rushes home but mom's not there. What to do? She's got to find the rest of the kids. Where are they?

The rest of the kids are in bossy Harriet's (Alice Playten) family bomb shelter, already dealing with Harriet's demands and orders. We don't entirely *hate* Harriet – after all she's just a little girl – but we don't trust her at all, we don't *like* her, and she shows how inflexible and heartless people can become in moments of crisis.

Of these kids, we really focus on two of the older kids – Steve (Christopher Howard) and Sarah. Two sensitive kids, they are starting to develop a deeper connection, a first love. As they increasingly believe the world might be ending, their plan to meet next week for a date (she invites him over to listen to music) is something they are holding on to – seriously – and the actors register this in their faces so beautifully. When Sarah runs to the bomb shelter for safe harbor, Harriet won't let her in, in spite of Steve's protestations. Sarah is crying and banging on that door, but nope, Harriet won't allow entrance. It's a chilling moment only softened when Steve runs out of the shelter, possibly risking his life to find Sarah.

"Stop!"

You get the sense it's not going to stop – the false alarm, yes, this will be known – but the fear of war? That's going to linger and take those kids into the late 60s when some could be drafted into the Vietnam War, when some will grow up and follow orders or not follow orders, or not trust anything. There's an interesting conversation that happens while the kids walk:

Brian: I wonder how it feels to see a dead person?

Harriet: You'll see plenty if the bomb comes.

Sarah: I don't want to hear about it.

Harriet: You have to face facts.

Steve: It's not a fact! The bomb doesn't have to come.

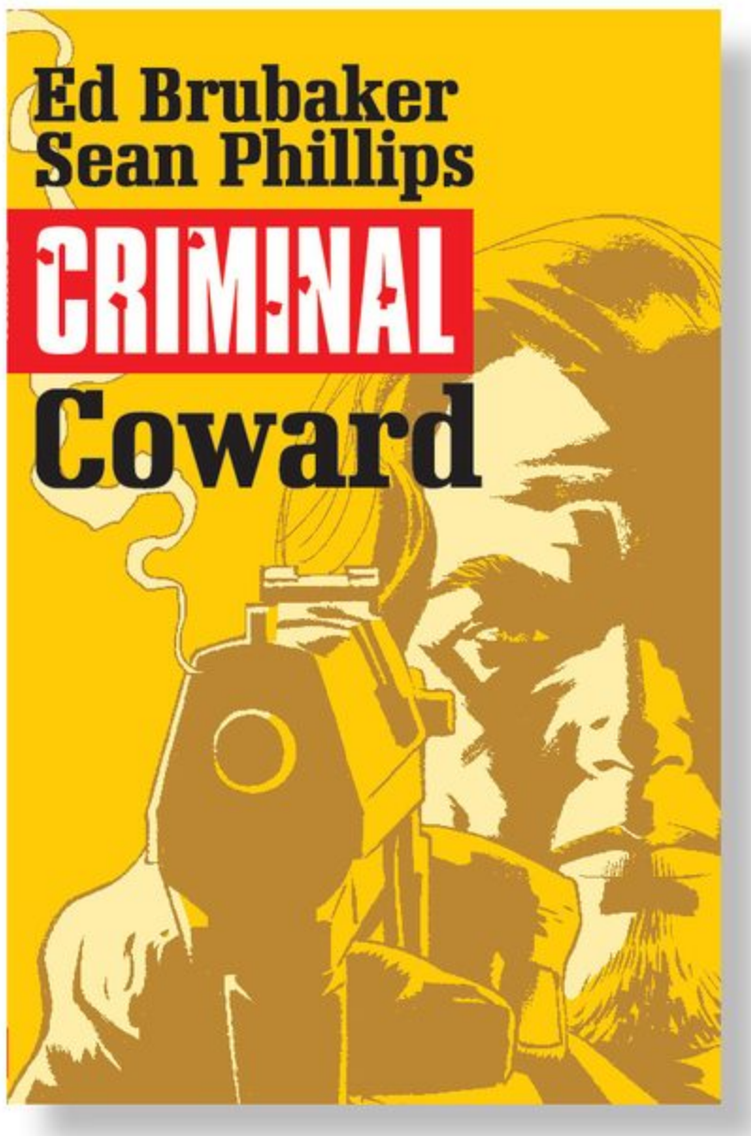
Sarah: So there. So shut up!

Harriet: Watch out who you're telling to shut up!

Yes… Watch out.

And here's the most haunting moment of the film. Nowhere to go, searching around the barren landscape, Sarah finds an abandoned refrigerator in a dumping ground. She climbs inside of it and closes the door. Steve runs right past it. He doesn't know she's in there. And we don't know if Sarah is going to suffocate in that fridge. It's a scene I will never forget. It's a scene I watched with a friend who thought he'd never seen this movie before and that moment bubbled up in him, like a repressed memory.

Characters are trapped in the Perrys' films, literally, in refrigerators, or swimming pools, or in marriages and affairs giving no profound satisfaction or release. Burt Lancaster banging on the door of his empty house, as if he's trying to break through to another consciousness or world (one he'll never reach) while revealing how lonely and empty he feels, is a refrain in the Perrys' work. Here, he and Eleanor are working more overtly within a trapped landscape – one of uncertainty. Most of the kids don't know what is really going on and Steve, running to find Sarah, sees a plane overhead and with fist clenched, yells, over and over,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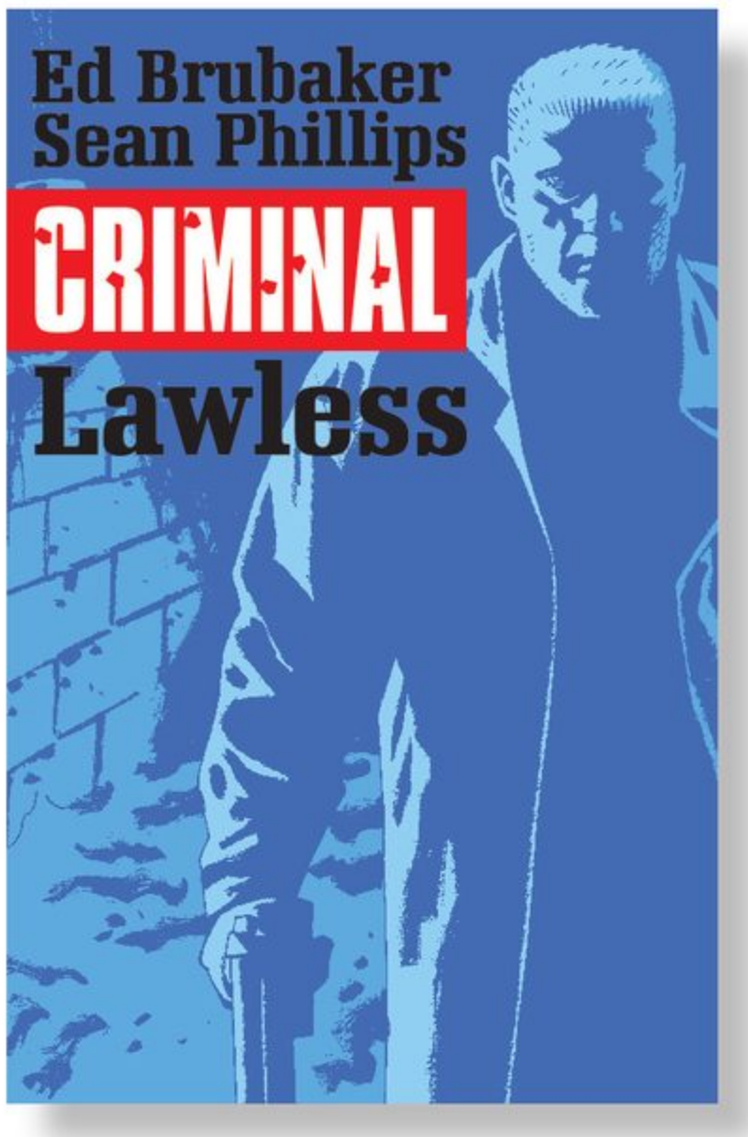
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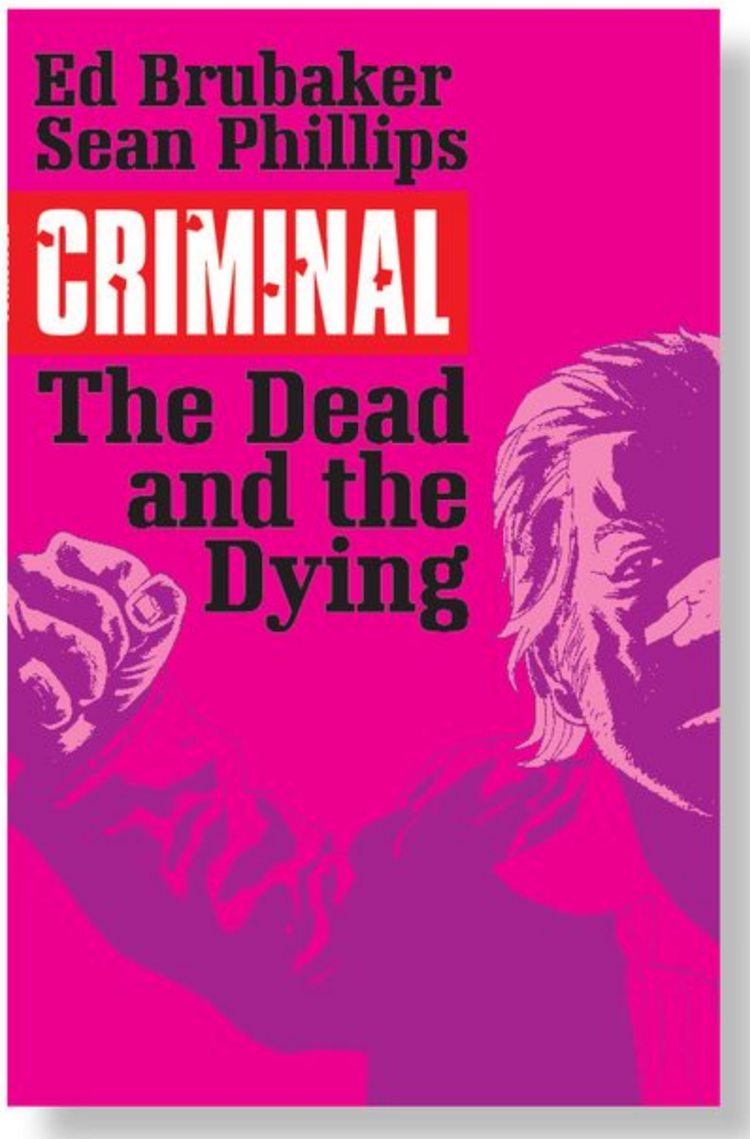
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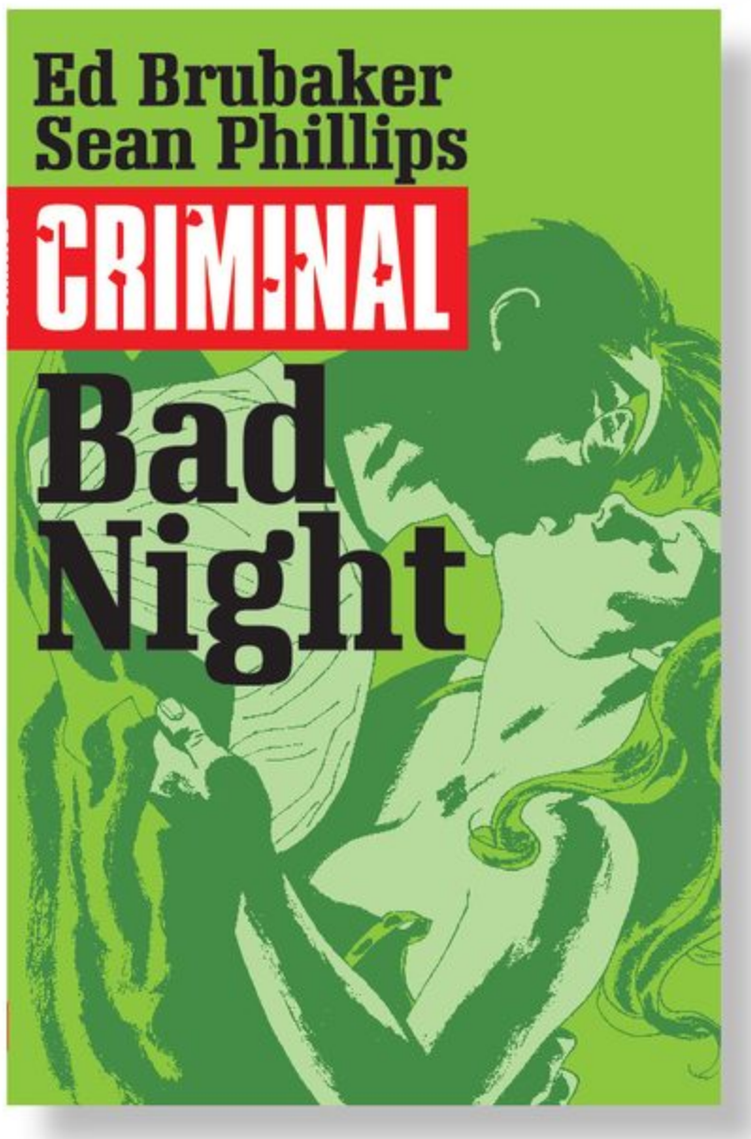
CRIMINAL
The Dead and the Dying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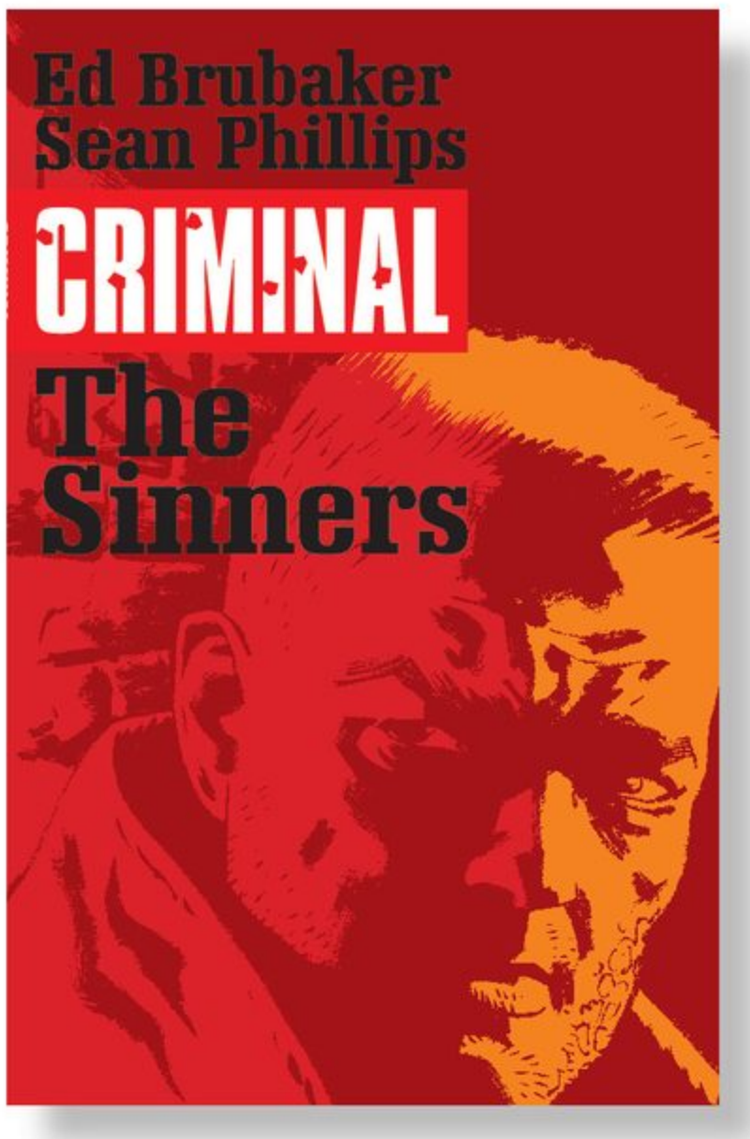
Bad Night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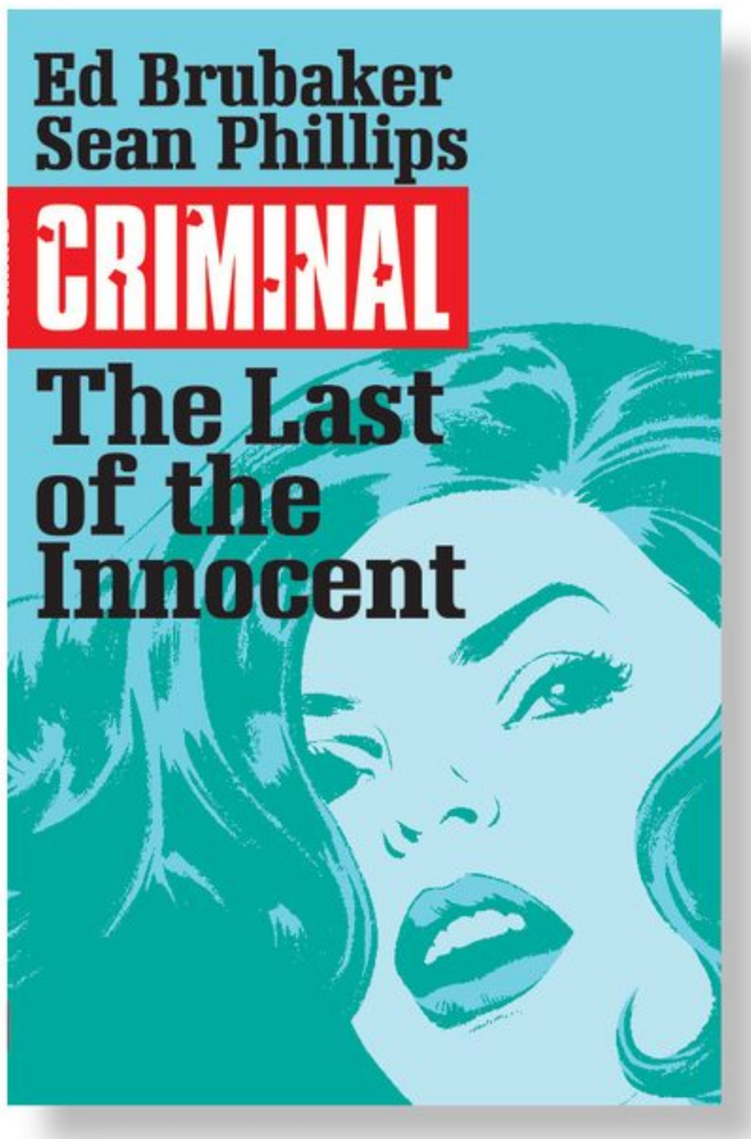
The Sinners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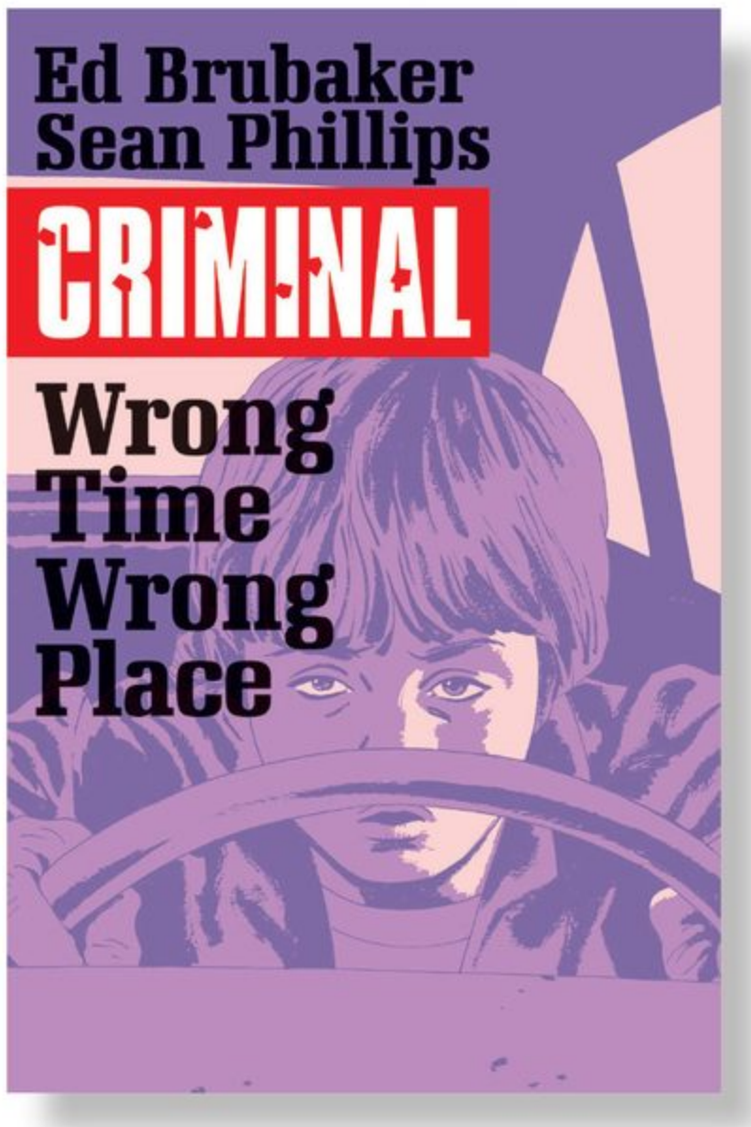
The Last of the Innocent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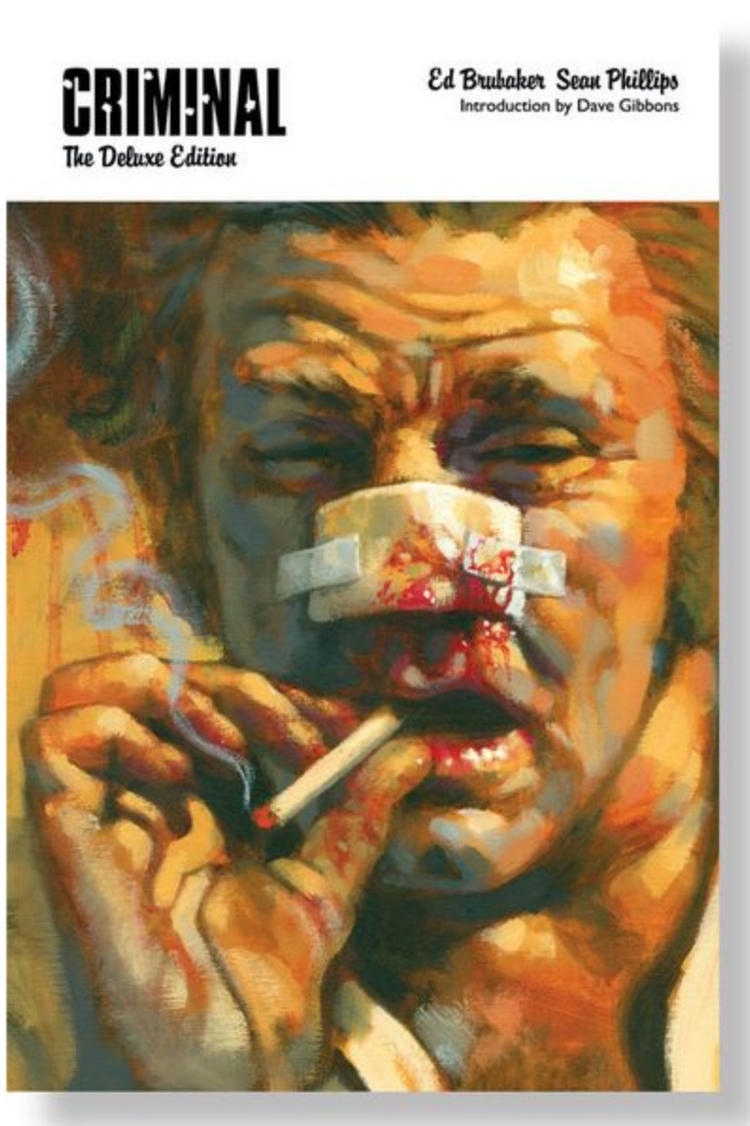
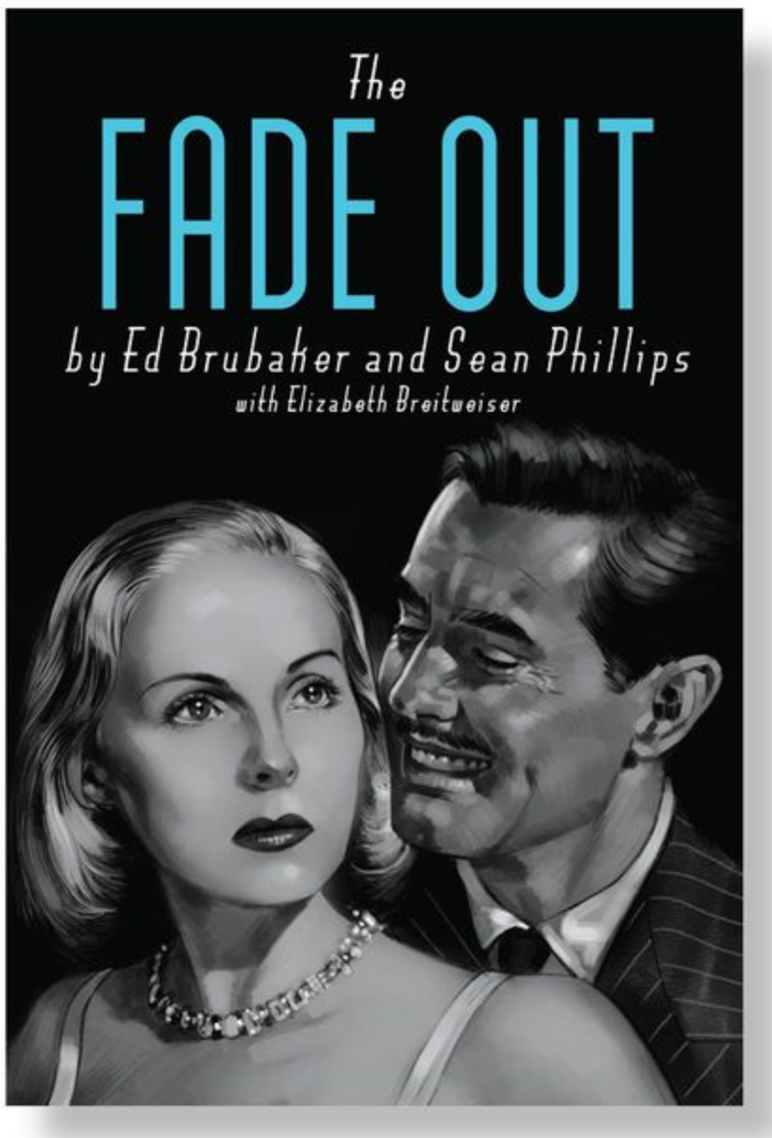
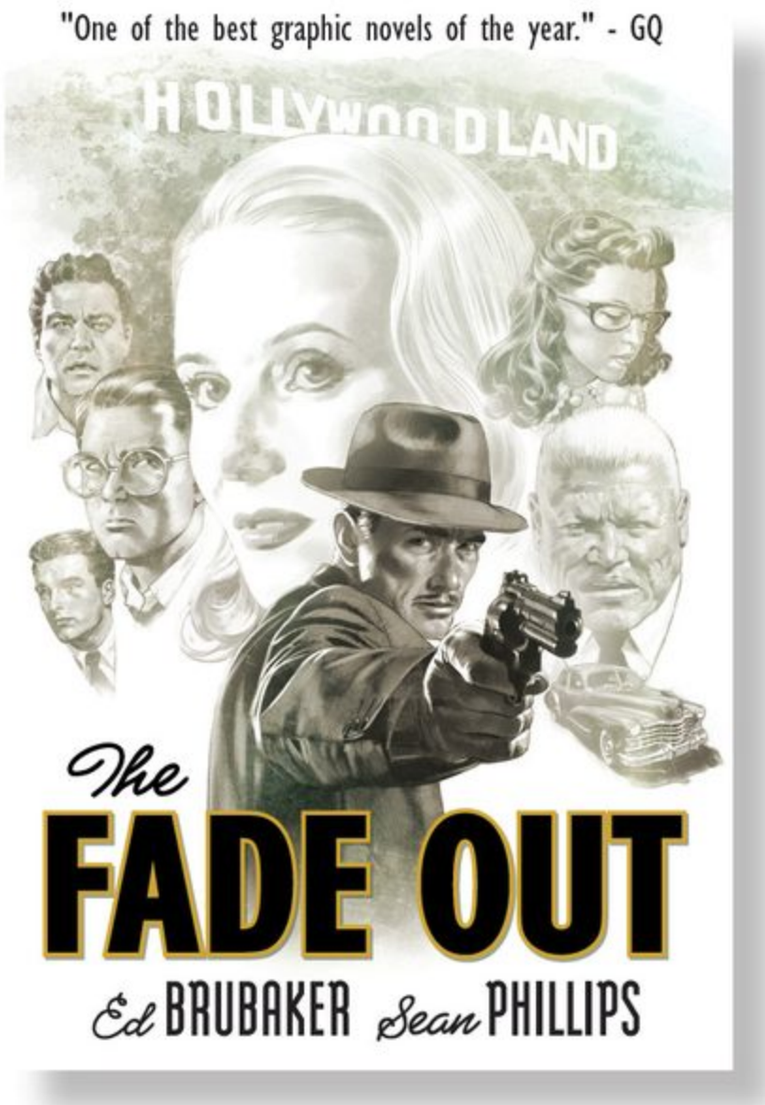
Wrong Time Wrong Place


CRIMINAL
The Deluxe Edition
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips
Introduction by Dave Gibbons

CRIMINAL
The Deluxe Edition Volume Two
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips



"CRIMINAL is equal parts John Woo's THE KILLER, Stanley Kubrick's THE KILLING, and Francis Ford Coppola's THE GODFATHER."
—Playboy Magazine



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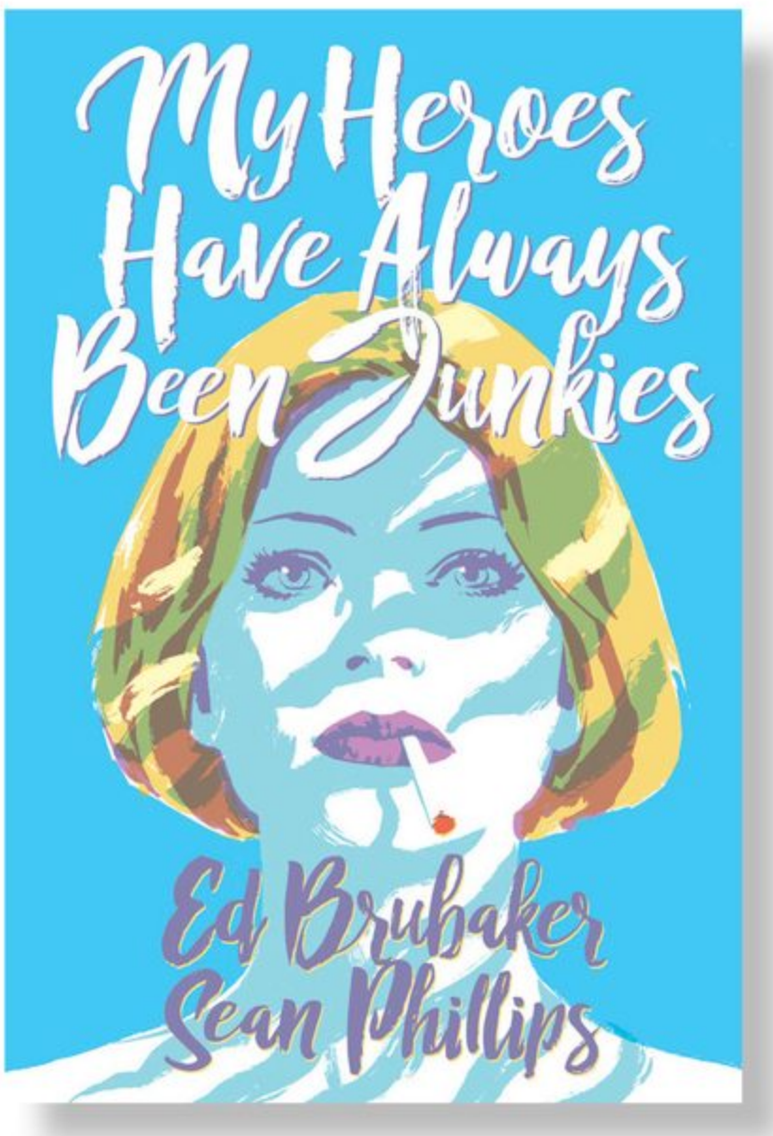
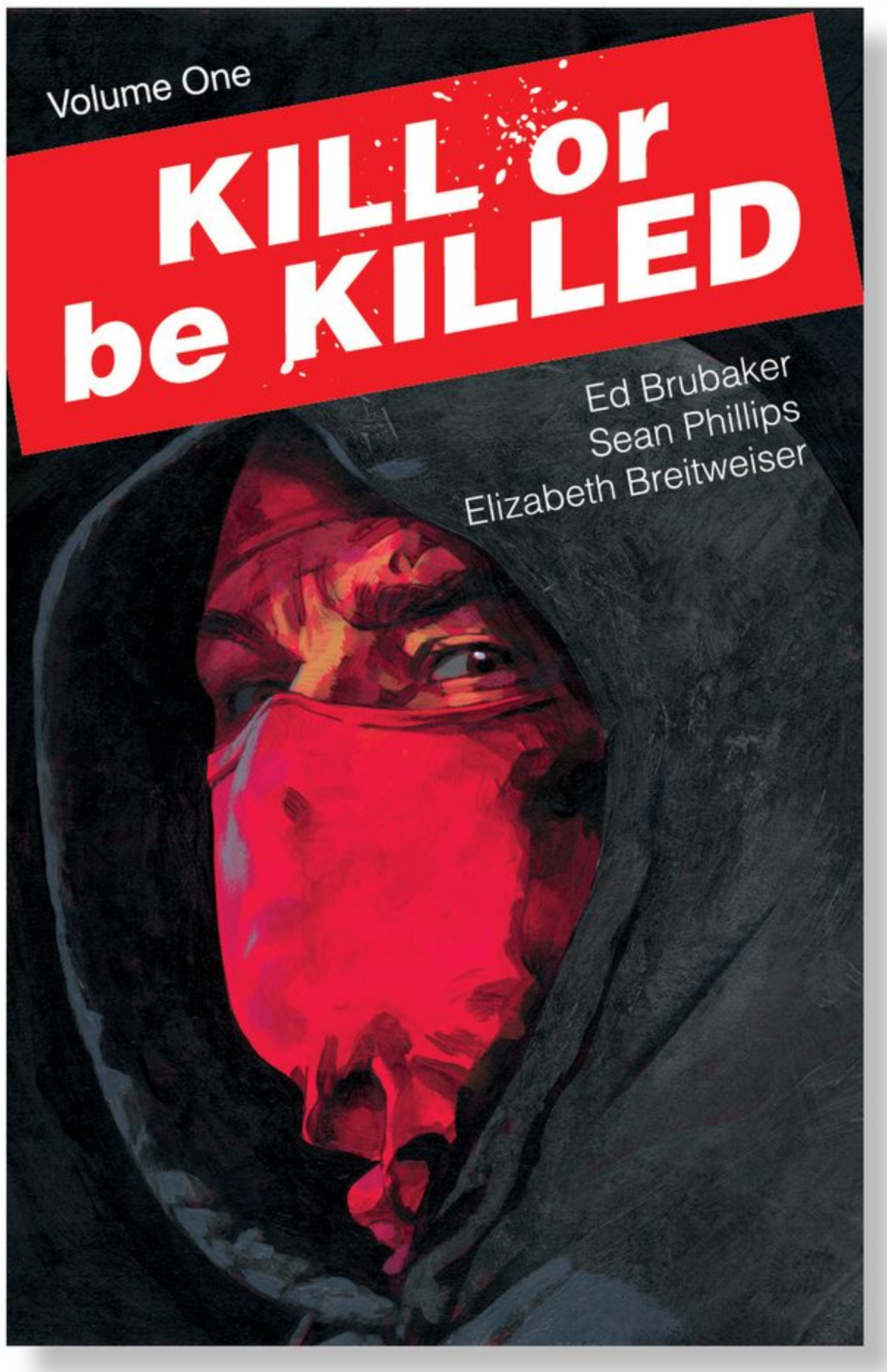


Newsweek's Best Comic Books of 2018
Thrillist's Best Comics & Graphic Novels of 2018
Eisner Winner—Best Original Graphic Novel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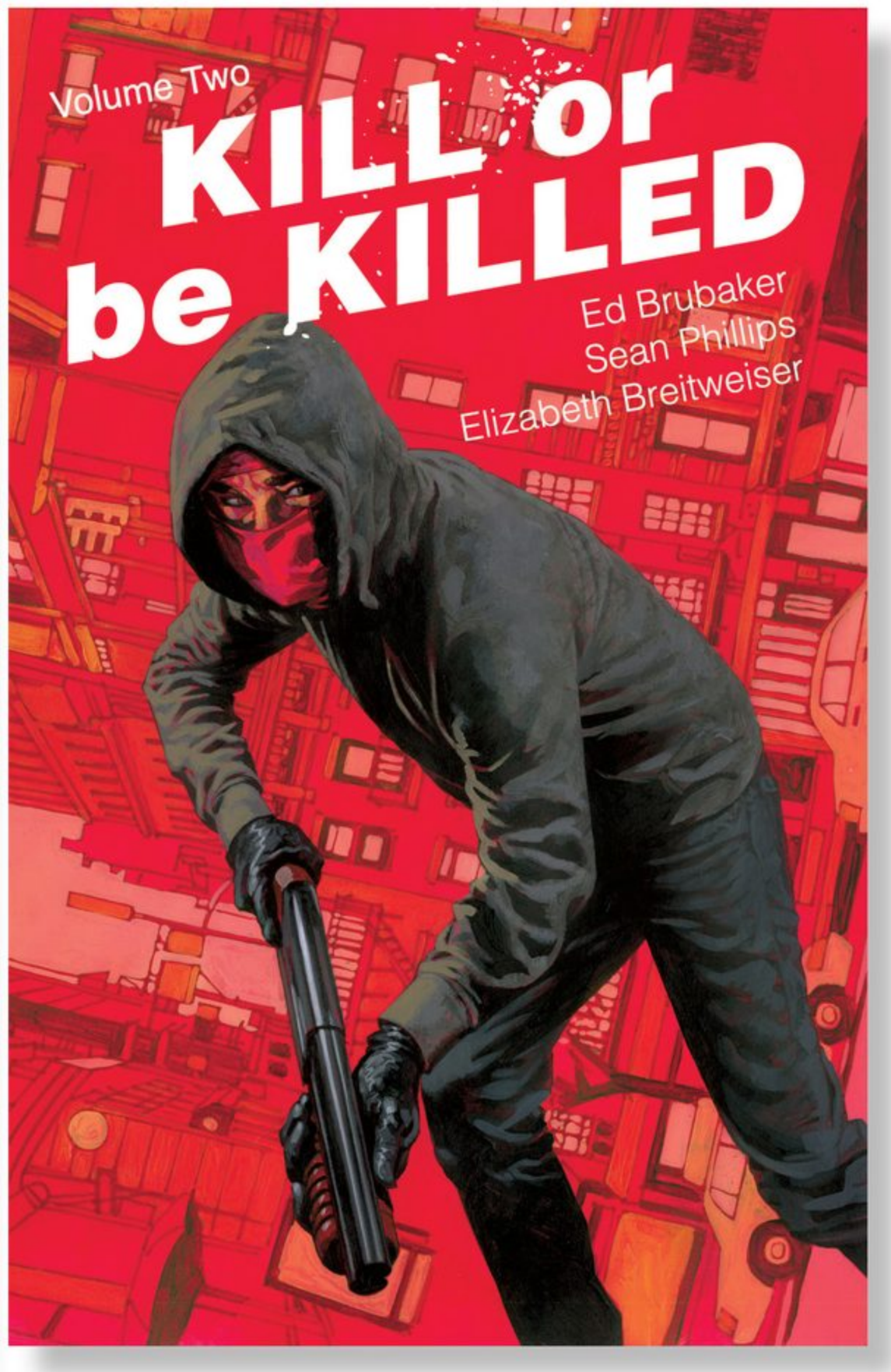
Elizabeth Breitweiser


Volume Two
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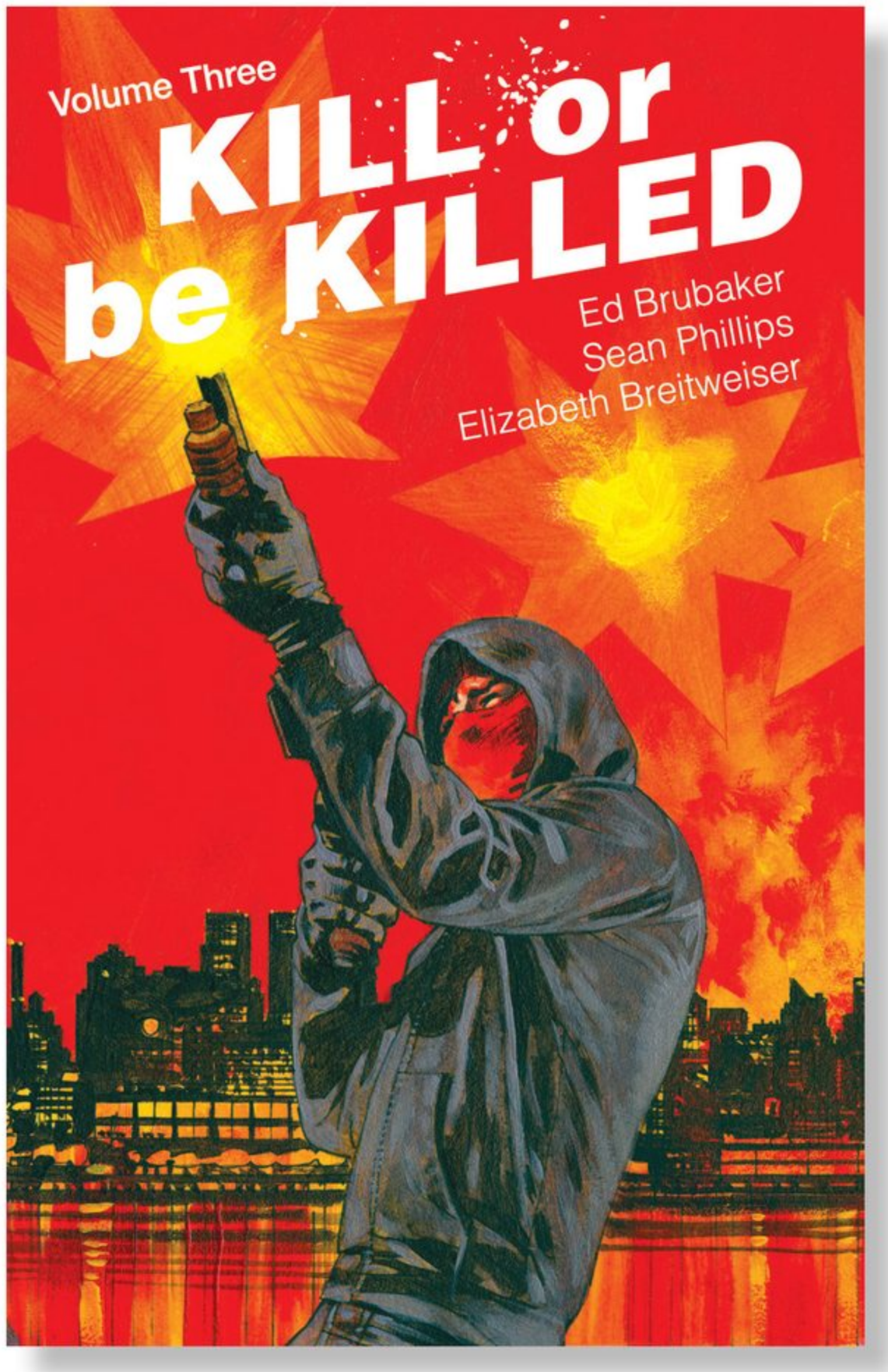
Volume Three
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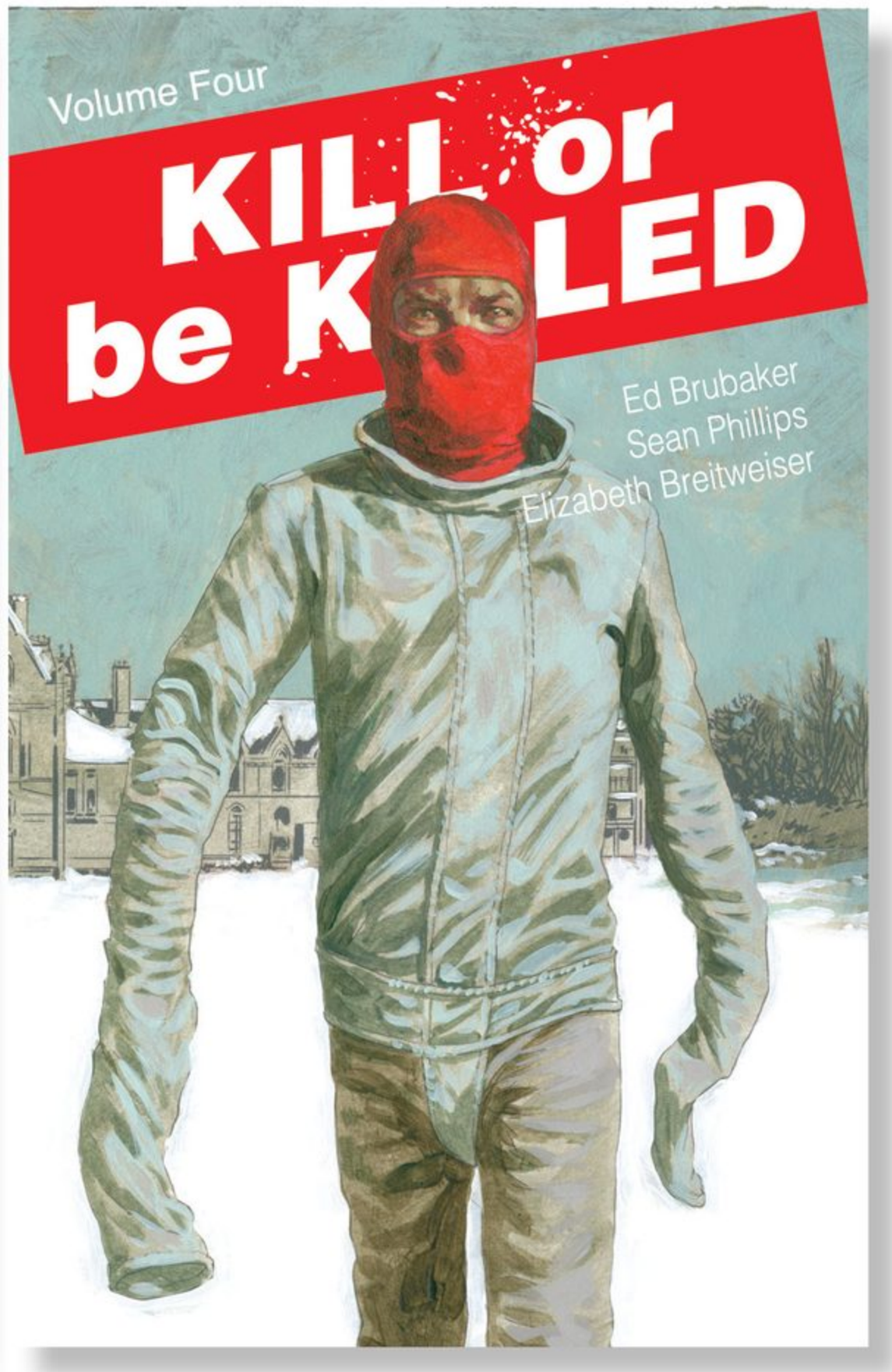
Volume Four
KILL or be KILLED
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Sean Phillips
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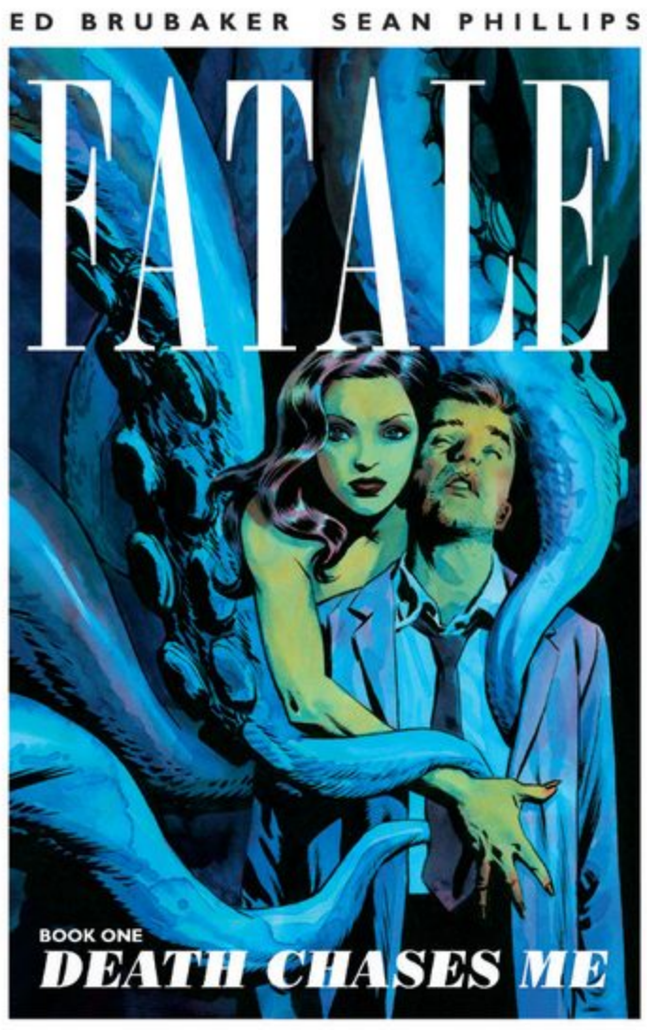

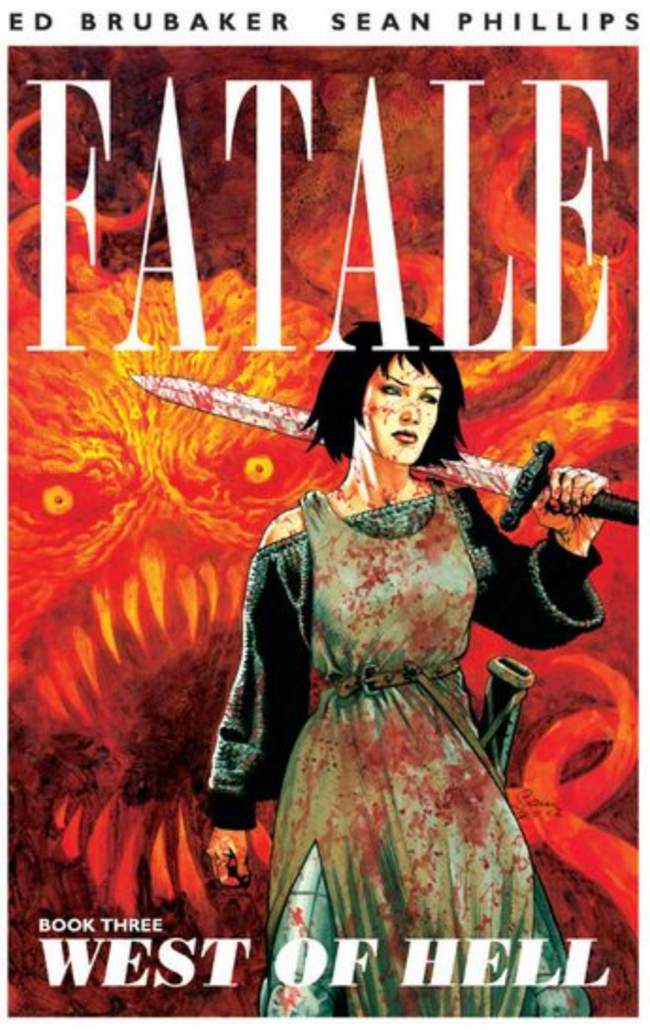

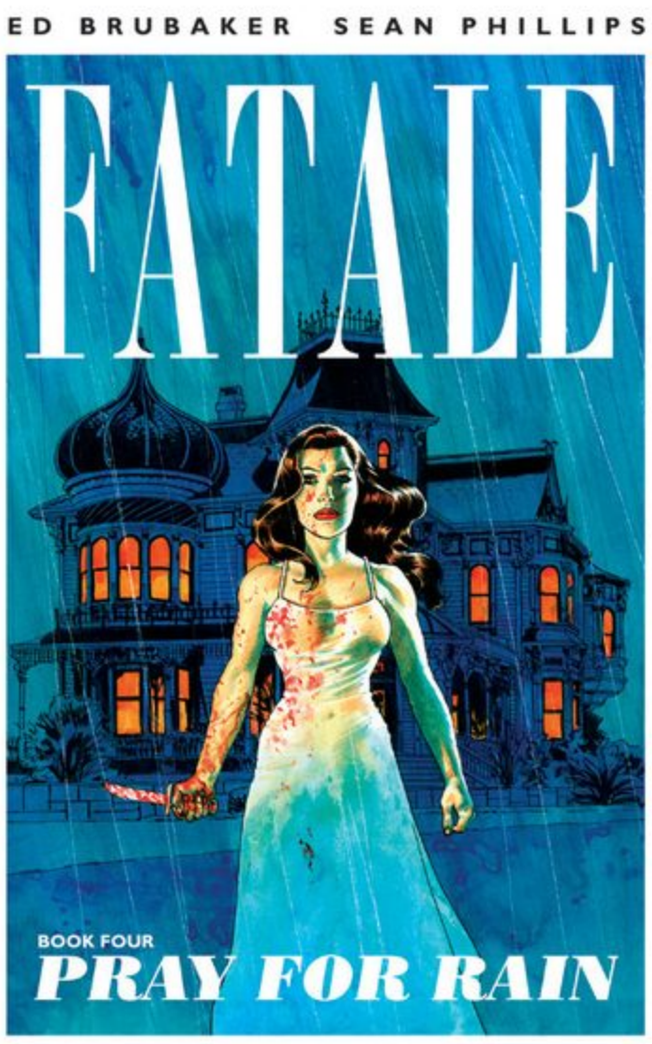

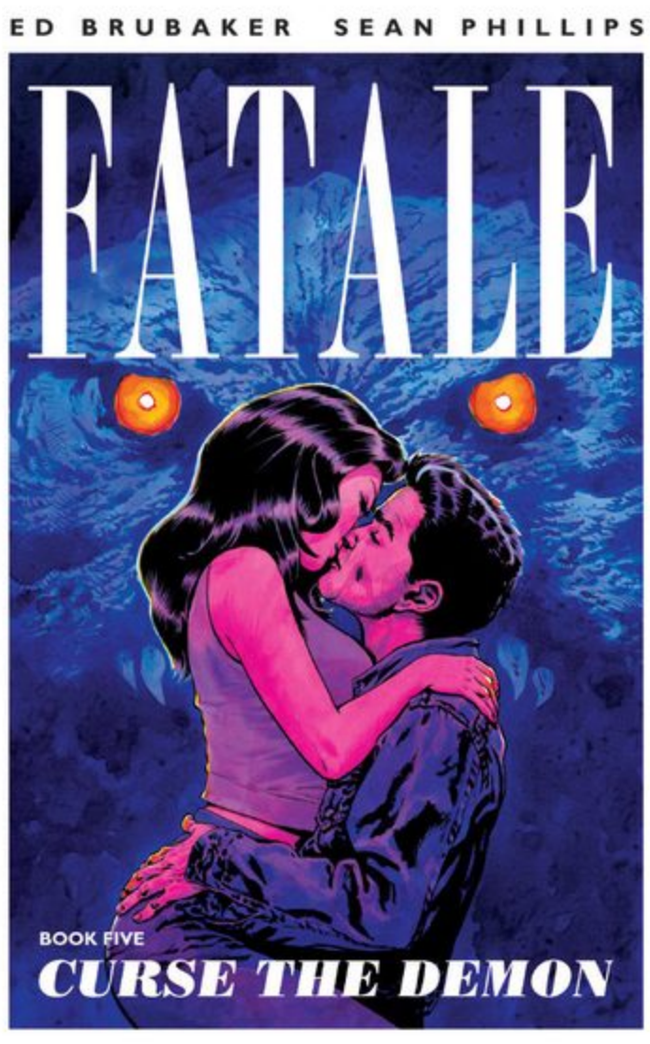

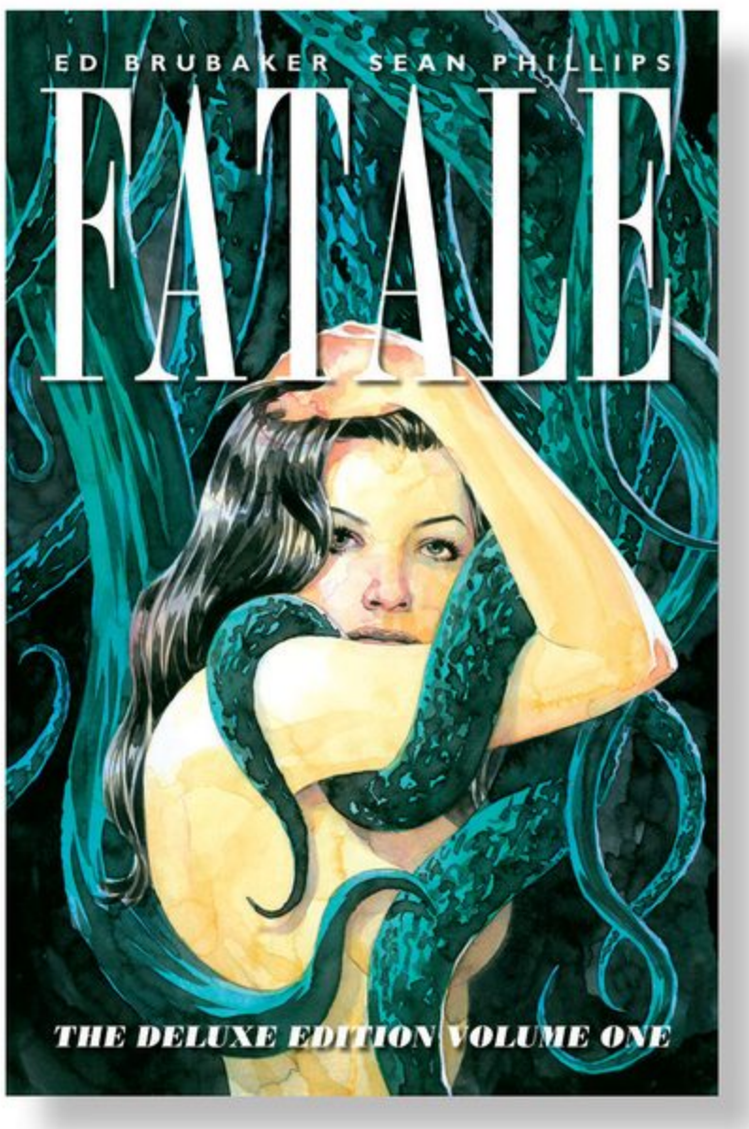

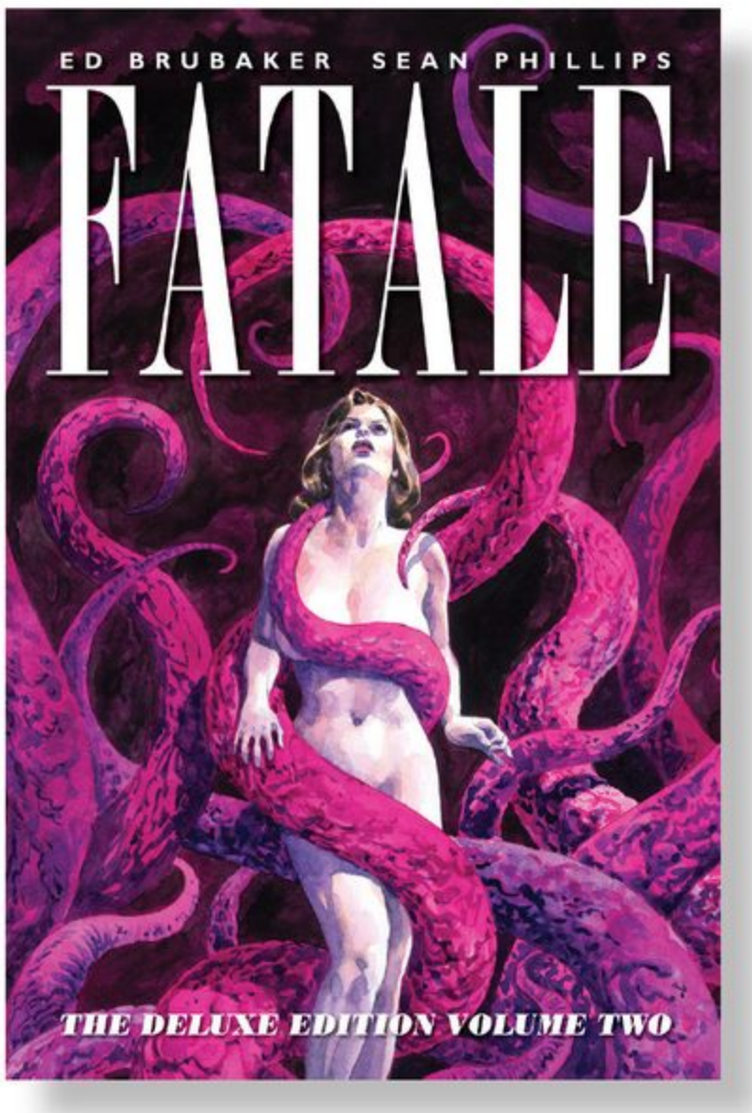

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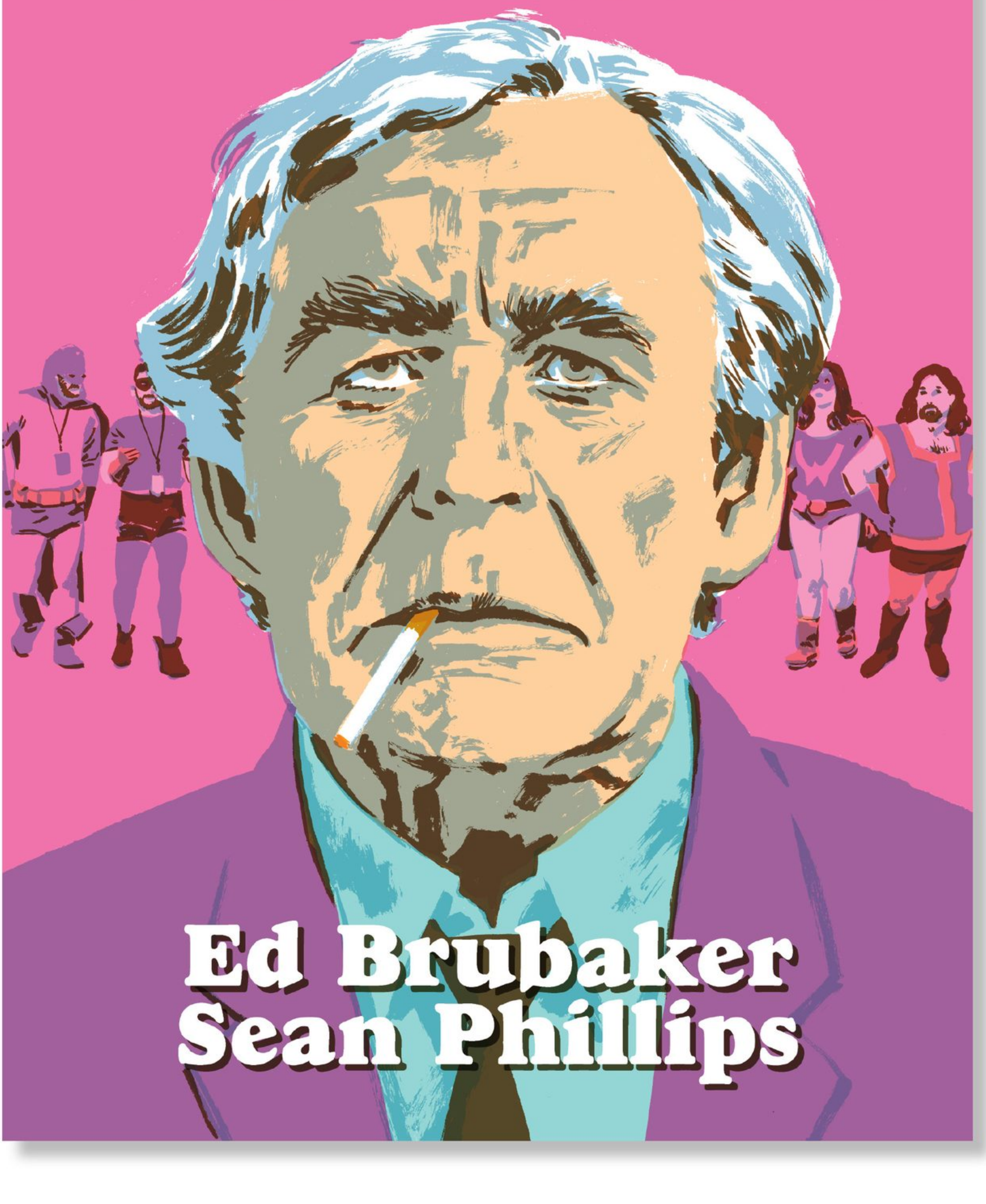
Bad Weekend



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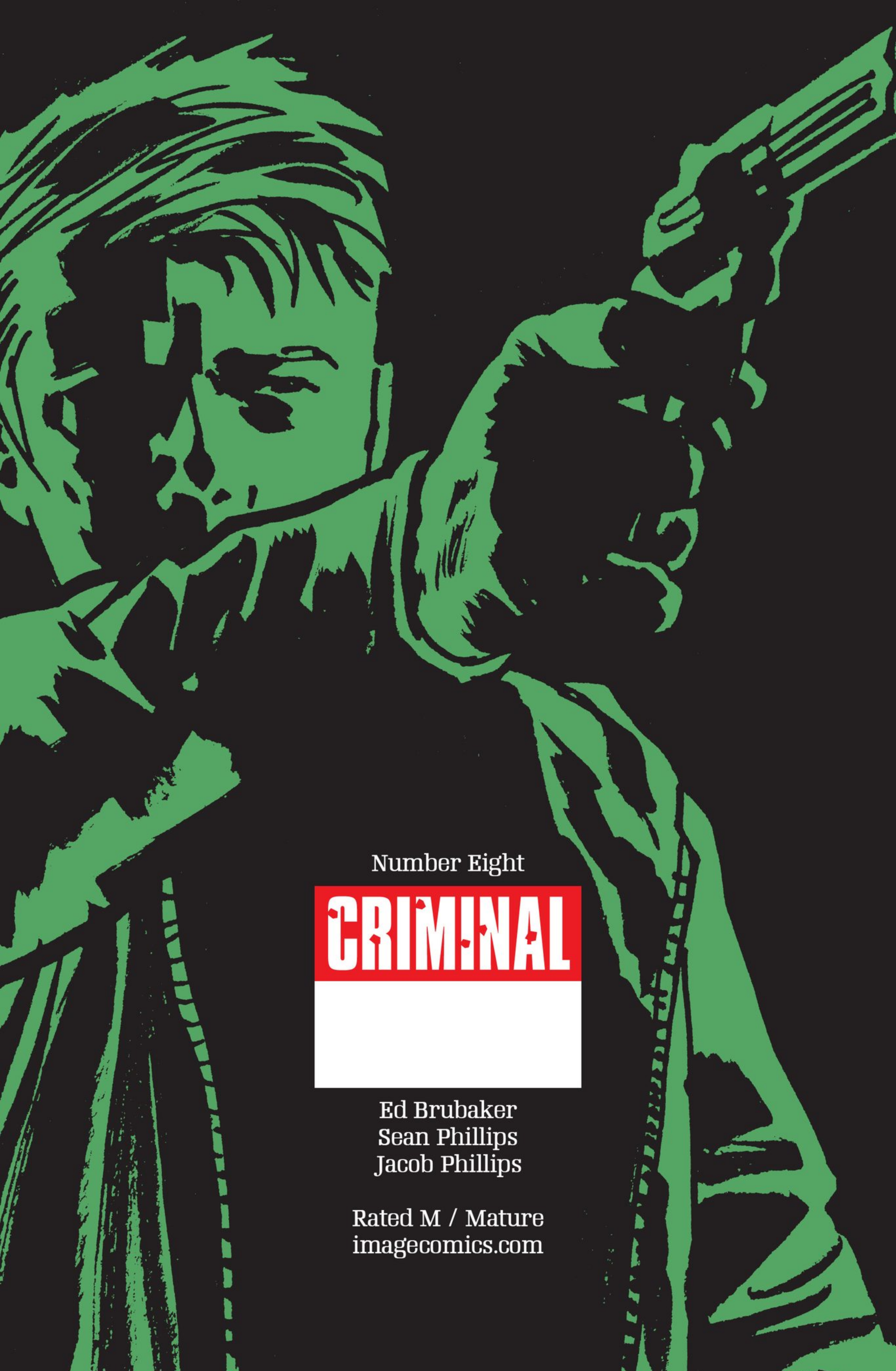

Number Eight

CRIMINAL

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
Jacob Phillips

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